The Household Refrigerator

A radio interview between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Wallace Kadderly, Office of Information, broadcast Tuesday, May 21, 1940, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 92 associate radio stations.

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WALLACE KADDERLY:
Yes, Everett, here we are in Washington, with our regular Tuesday line-up of Department of Agriculture reporters. First reporter up ..... Ruth Van Deman.

RUTH VAN DEMAN:
Wallace, I don't know how far I can keep up with you in this baseball language. But Item No. 1 of news here should make a hit ..... at least with everybody who's been asking us about cotton stockings.

Six of our designs are now in commercial production. They're being made by three companies that distribute their goods all over the country.

KADDERLY:
That means that these new cotton hose are on sale in the stores then?

VAN DEMAN:
Some are. For instance, this mesh design I'm wearing.

KADDERLY:
Any of the plain ones being manufactured yet?

VAN DEMAN:
Yes ..... some pure white ones, especially for nurses' wear ..... and another with open-work clock design up the ankle. It's being made in all the stylish shades of tan and beige.

KADDERLY:
Is there any way the woman who buys these cotton hose can identify them as the Bureau of Home Economics designs?

VAN DEMAN:
Yes, they're stamped on the top ..... Government 103, or whatever the number is. Of course that means merely that they're made according to the designs worked out in our laboratories. It doesn't mean that the Government's standing behind the quality of any particular pair of hose.

KADDERLY:
I understand. Your hosiery specialists specified the kind of cotton yarn to be used .....

VAN DEMAN:
The number, the gauge, the way it should be knit. There our part ends.

KADDERLY:
In other words, the Bureau of Home Economics is only showing what can be done with American-grown cotton in women's hosiery, as one of the ways to absorb some of the cotton surplus.

(OVER)

VAN DEMAN:
That's right.

Well, item 2 on my schedule here, is the household refirgerator.

KADDERLY:
How to buy?..... how to operate? .... how to clean?

VAN DEMAN:
A little bit on all three, probably. Our household equipment people have got together recently a list of the points to look for when you buy a refrigerator.

KADDERLY:
I'd like to know how they figure the size of refrigerator for a certain size of family ..... a family of four, for instance.

VAN DEMAN:
Size or capacity?

KADDERLY:
Capacity. That's what I mean of course ..... the space where you keep food cold.

VAN DEMAN:
The common rule is, at least 5 cubic feet for a family of two .... and one more cubic foot for each two additional persons.

KADDERLY:
At least 5 cubic feet for the family of two, and another cubic foot for the next two persons. Then for the family of four that would be a refrigerator of 6 cubic feet.

VAN DEMAN:
At least that much. And that's for the town or city family that doesn't buy in large quantities.

KADDERLY:
Then a family on the farm would probably need a larger refrigerator, if they keep much milk, and butter, and fresh meat on hand.

VAN DEMAN:
And don't forget that many families now have frozen foods from a community locker. Frozen foods have to be kept frozen right up to the time they're cooked.

KADDERLY:
How do you answer the question about what kind of a refrigerator to buy?

VAN DEMAN:
Mechanical or ice cooled, you mean?

KADDERLY:
Yes.

VAN DEMAN:
That's something else every family has to figure out for itself ..... on the basis of what kind of service there is in a community for ice or for the fuel to run the mechanical unit. All that figures into cost also.

KADDERLY:
Yes, I realize the cost of how you're going to keep the refirgerator cold is just as much a part of the actual cost as the figure on the price tag.

VAN DEMAN:
I have some figures here on what it takes to operate refrigerators of 6 cubic feet capacity, for a month, under test conditions.

KADDERLY:
Let's have them. I'd like to jot them down.

VAN DEMAN:
I'll go slowly then. Ice first ..... 700 pounds of ice.

KADDERLY:
Ice ... 700 pounds.

VAN DEMAN:
Electricity ..... 30 kilowatt hours.

KADDERLY:
Electricity, 30 kilowatt hours.

VAN DEMAN:
Gas, ... natural gas about 1000 cubic feet ..... manufactured, 1800 cubic feet.

KADDERLY:
Natural gas, 1000 feet .... manufactured, 1800 cubic feet.

VAN DEMAN:
Kerosene .....

KADDERLY:
That's right, ... a good many refrigerators are colled by kerosene-burning units.

VAN DEMAN:
In some places in the country it's the only possible way to have a household refrigerator ..... Well, it takes about 15 gallons of kerosene a month to operate the 6-cubic foot capacity.

KADDERLY:
Are all these figures in that pamphlet you spoke of ..... in case I lose this slip of paper?

VAN DEMAN:
Yes, they're there for anybody's reference any time. That is any time until new models and new inventions make them out of date.

KADDERLY:
What about the temperature a refrigerator should maintain?

VAN DEMAN:
That's another hard one to answer. So much depends on the way a family uses a regrigerator.

We can say this much though. There should be some place in a refrigerator where the temperature stays at 45 degrees or lower. Milk and very perishable foods like that need to be kept around 45 degrees. And the warmest spot in a refrigerator shouldn't be over 50.

KADDERLY:
50 degrees Fahrenheit. Will ordinary household refrigerators keep those temperatures with a load of food stacked on the shelves?

VAN DEMAN:
They're supposed to. But as I say a lot depends on the way they're used and abused. As you know you shouldn't stack in too much food too closely.

KADDERLY:
Yes, I know ..... leave enough room for air to circulate. That's one of the laws of efficient refrigeration.

VAN DEMAN:
And insulation ..... that is the kind of insulating material and how much there is of it ..... has a great deal to do too with maintaining a low temperature.

KADDERLY:
How can you tell about the insulation?

VAN DEMAN:
To be frank you can't tell much. You have to take it on faith and the word of the manufacturer. That's one reason why we'd like to see every refrigerator carry a label that gives the purchaser the facts on these points listed here.

KADDERLY: (reading)
"Manufacturer's name.
Usable storage space, in cubic feet.
Shelf area, in square feet.
Ice capacity, in pounds.
Average temperature.
Amount of ice, kerosene, gas, or electricity needed for operation under certain stated test conditions.
Length of time guarantee is in force.
What guarantee covers."

Well, that information ought to be easy enough to supply.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, it's chiefly information that the manufacturer has in his files. It's just a case of passing it on to the woman who buys his product.

On the cleaning end, Wallace, how to keep the refrigerator sweet and sanitary, I'm going to refer to the new housecleaning bulletin ..... and let it go at that today.

KADDERLY:

Sure there are copies available? That's been very popular.

VAN DEMAN:

There were yesterday when we called. Of course many things can happen in 24 hours.

KADDERLY:

Well, barring an over night raid on the supply of the house cleaning bulletin then, Farm and Home friends, we can offer you two publications today. Both of these come from the Bureau of Home Economics. So that's the place to send your requests. (Ad lib offer of "Housecleaning management and methods" and the "The Household Refrigerator - Points to Look for in Selecting.")